Walking in Crete

Explore the coastal and mountain terrain of Crete on this walking holiday, discovering isolated beaches, secluded coves and impressive canyons. Walk in the White Mountains, hike through the Samaria and Zaros gorges and experience rural Cretan hospitality and the beauty that this wonderful island has to offer.

Trip highlights

- **Omalos Plateau** - Beautiful walks in the White Mountains.
- **Samaria Gorge** - Hike through Europe's longest gorge.
- **Ayia Roumeli** - Scenic ferry journey along the coast.
- **Loutro** - Traffic free traditional coastal village.
- **Preveli** - Cliff-top monastery.
- **Zaros** - Beautiful gorge walk in the Idi Mountains.

**ACCOMMODATION GRADE:**
Standard
Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**WALKING GRADE:**
Moderate
For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.
**GROUP SIZE:**

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

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**Itinerary**

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

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### DAY 1 - Join trip Chania

Arrive Chania and check-in at our hotel. Chania is a beautiful old Venetian walled town, with a bustling harbour and lively tavernas - a great place to start your introduction to Crete.

- **Accommodation:** Arkadi Hotel (or similar)
- **Standard Hotel**
- **Single room available**
- **Meals Provided:** None

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### DAY 2 - Walking tour of Chania; drive to Omalos Plateau

This morning we will take a walking tour around Chania. We will walk around the harbour and through the winding back streets, home to the traditional cobbler who make the very traditional Cretan leather boots. This afternoon we take a bus up the winding roads to the Omalos Plateau (1082m). This wild plateau is situated in the middle of the massive White Mountains, poised on the edge of a titanic split in the rock and the gateway to the longest and perhaps most beautiful ravine in Europe, the Samaria Gorge. The isolation of the plateau made it an historic refuge for Cretan revolutionaries against the Turks.

Today’s 2km walk is expected to take around 1.5hrs, no ascent or descent.

- **Accommodation:** Neos Omalos Hotel (or similar)
- **Standard Hotel**
- **Single room available**
- **Meals Provided:** Breakfast

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### DAY 3 - Optional walks in the White Mountains

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We spend the day exploring the peaks and plateau of the White Mountains on foot, with walks available to suit all abilities. A challenging optional walk is to the summit of the mighty Mount Gingilos (2080m, about 7-8 hours walking) for spectacular views of the north and south coasts. Alternatively, ascend to the refuge at Kallergi mountain. You can enjoy lunch at the refuge and take in the wonderful views.

Today's 8.5km walk is expected to take around 6hrs with an ascent and descent of 940m

Accommodation: Neos Omalos Hotel (or similar)

Today's 15km walk is expected to take around 6.5hrs with 1250m descent

Accommodation: Madares Pension (or similar)

This quaint seashore village, perched on craggy rocks and nestled in a cove, affords an opportunity to experience life in a less accessible part of the island. Most houses are the very traditional white with blue shutters providing a harmony of architecture. We'll spend the day here, perhaps taking a walk along the coast or inland, swimming or simply relaxing. An optional boat trip by water taxi can often be arranged to Marmara or Finix beach. Alternatively, you may prefer something more active such as a full day or half day walk behind the village, up to the historic village of Anopolis or perhaps down the Aradena Gorge enjoying spectacular views of the coast en route. In the evening you may care to try the delicious fresh seafood caught by local fishermen.

Accommodation: Madares Pension (or similar)
Today we get the ferry along the coast to Chora Sfakion. A pleasant coastal village with a few hundred inhabitants and an old reputation as a lair of brigands, smugglers and pirates. The Sfakians cherish their independence and see themselves as Sfakians first, Cretans second and Greeks third! As a rallying point for revolutionaries, there are many sea caves in the area which were used as great hiding places during disputes. We then journey by bus to Zaros in the rugged Idi Mountains. We’ll pause en route at Preveli cliff-top monastery. Perched high above the sea, its fame was capped in World War Two when the monks sheltered allied troops who were stranded on the island after the Battle of Crete and helped them to escape from the beaches nearby. The views from here are magnificent. We also break the journey for a short while in the pretty Greek village of Spili. We plan to arrive in the village of Zaros in the early evening.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Idi (or similar)

Deep in the heart of Crete are the Idi Mountains. This region is very scenic and is particularly noted for its spring waters, which are bottled and sold throughout the island. Our primary reason for visiting Zaros is to walk in the surrounding mountains, and we set off after breakfast to explore the dramatic Rouvas Gorge. Local vehicles take us to a steep rough track from which we’ll descend the dramatic 5km long gorge on foot enjoying spectacular views of the Psiloritis range as we go. The afternoon is left free for you to explore the surrounding area. Located in a peaceful setting overlooking the Koutsoulidi valley, this is an ideal spot to relax.

Today’s 5.5km walk is expected to take around 4.5hrs with a 540m descent.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Idi (or similar)

We leave Zaros today to drive to Heraklion airport where trip ends.

**Meals Provided:** Breakfast
### Walking and Trekking information

#### Walking grade
Moderate

#### Trek details
We walk for 4 days for between 1.5 and 6 hours each day (including one optional day). We generally trek on quite rocky trails with some occasional short, steep ascents.

#### Max walking altitude (m)
1400
Why book this trip

This island walking holiday on Crete provides the best that the region has to offer; dramatic gorges, beautiful coastlines, scenic traditional villages and welcoming Cretan hospitality.

What's included?

- **Included meals**
  - Breakfast: 7

- **Transport**
  - Bus
  - Ferry
  - Taxi

- **Trip staff**
  - Explore Tour Leader
  - Boat Crew
  - Driver(s)

- **Accommodation**
  - 2 nights
  - 5 nights standard hotel

Trip information

**Country information**

**Greece**

**Climate**

Greece has predominantly hot, dry summers, May - October with temperatures reaching into the mid thirties in July and August. May and October themselves can be less predictable and may have some rain and cooler evenings. Wild flowers bloom in April and May adding much colour to the trails. At the beginning and end of the season the villages tend to be very quiet. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up to date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

**Time difference to GMT**

+2
Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Loutro - Water taxi to nearby beaches €4.
Cooking Lesson - €12.

Clothing

Light clothes suitable for walking in warm weather are recommended. However early and late in the season (May/June/September/October) also bring warm clothing in case of drops in temperature or the odd shower. In high places like Omalos nights can be cold, so a fleece jacket is a good thing to have at any time of year.

Footwear

We recommend you bring lightweight walking boots with ankle support, make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don’t overload yourself. A daysac for use during day walks is essential (your main luggage will be transported by support vehicle whilst on the walks). Therefore, please use a soft bag for ease of packing.

Equipment

Bring a personal water bottle (at least 2l capacity) and sun protection for use during the walks. You may find a trekking pole useful over the downhill sections. You may also wish to take a swimming costume and towel.

Tipping

Explore leader
At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew
Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group’s tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

Greece
Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price
£12.00 - 16.00

Beer price
£3.5

Water price
£0.9

Foreign Exchange

Local currency
Euro

Recommended Currency For Exchange
GBP Sterling or US Dollars, cash.

Where To Exchange
We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability
Cash can be drawn from ATMs from all types of cards in most areas in Greece, including the islands.

Credit Card Acceptance
In major restaurants.

Travellers Cheques
Banking hours may make exchanging Travellers Cheques more difficult.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information
Bus, Ferry, Taxi

Essential Information

FCO Advice
We strongly recommend that you check your government’s travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click here.

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click here

Under 18 immigration guidance
Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee
Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. Booking Conditions

Visa and Passport Information
Greece: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

**Booking conditions**

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

**Transfers**

Find out more about *Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.*

**Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

**Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station. Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click here

**Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

**Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

**Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

**Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

**Maximum altitude (m)**

1400

**Non refundable permits**
Greece

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but we recommend protection against tetanus and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.